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Ken Burns and Lynn Novick's **HEMINGWAY** to Premiere April 5, 2021 on PBS

Three-Part, Six-Hour Film Series Explores the Life and Work of the Legendary
Writer and His Enduring Influence on Literature and Culture

Voice Actors Include Jeff Daniels as Hemingway; Meryl Streep, Keri Russell,
Mary-Louise Parker and Patricia Clarkson as Hemingway's Four Wives



*Ernest Hemingway on the fishing boat Anita circa 1929.
Courtesy of Ernest Hemingway Photograph Collection,
John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum,
Boston.*

Arlington, VA – September 10, 2020 – Ernest Hemingway, the iconic literary figure considered one of the greatest American writers and among the first to live and work at the treacherous nexus of art and celebrity, is the subject of an upcoming three-part, six-hour documentary series directed by award-winning filmmakers Ken Burns and Lynn Novick (**THE VIETNAM WAR, PROHIBITION, THE WAR**) coming to PBS April 5-7, 2021 at 8:00 – 10:00 p.m. ET (check local listings). [A trailer for the series is available here.](#)

The documentary paints an intimate picture of Hemingway the writer — who captured on paper the complexities of the human condition in spare and profound prose, and whose work remains deeply influential around the world — while also penetrating the myth of Hemingway the man's man to reveal a deeply troubled and ultimately tragic figure. The film also explores Hemingway's limitations and biases as an artist and a man of his time.

HEMINGWAY — written by Geoffrey C. Ward and produced by Sarah Botstein, both longtime collaborators of Burns and Novick — interweaves a close study of the biographical events of the author's life with excerpts from his fiction, non-fiction and short stories, informed by interviews with celebrated writers, scholars and Hemingway's son, Patrick. The filmmakers explore the painstaking process through which Hemingway created some of the most important works of fiction in American letters, including novels *The Sun Also Rises*, *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls* and *The Old Man and the Sea*; short stories "Hills Like White Elephants," "The Short and Happy Life of Francis Macomber," "Up in Michigan," "Indian Camp" and "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," as well as the nonfiction works *Death in the Afternoon* and *A Moveable Feast*.



“**HEMINGWAY** is both an intimate, turbulent family saga and an examination of some of the greatest works of American literature in the 20th century,” said director Ken Burns. “The documentary attempts to show how flawed our assumptions about Ernest Hemingway and his writing have been. At the same time, we are unsparing in our inquiry into less well-known aspects of his character and writing. Our intent is to offer viewers an honest portrayal of a complex and conflicted writer who left an indelible mark on literature.”

“In an era when Americans are re-evaluating so many icons, Hemingway is a particularly compelling figure to revisit,” said director Lynn Novick. “He was hugely complicated, deeply flawed, and he truly revolutionized the art of writing. One of the great revelations of this project was asking renowned writers from around the world — Mario Vargas Llosa, Edna O’Brien, Abraham Verghese, Leonardo Padura, Mary Karr — to share their insights into Hemingway’s work and why it’s still important today.”

“One of the great challenges of this project,” said producer Sarah Botstein, “was finding ways — visually, cinematically — to show how Hemingway honed his craft and how he used words to such extraordinary effect. In collaboration with our editors, we deployed all the tools in our filmmaking toolbox — graphic effects, archival footage and photographs, live cinematography, sound effects — to make Hemingway’s work come fully alive on screen.”

“While many of us studied Ernest Hemingway in school, the true significance of his work was perhaps never fully appreciated. Through this extraordinary film, Ken, Lynn and Sarah have shed new light on the contributions and complexity of one of America’s most influential writers,” said Paula Kerger, President and CEO of PBS. “Public television continues to be a destination for thoughtful and thought-provoking biographies, and we are uniquely positioned to bring these important stories into the classroom through PBS LearningMedia.”

Ernest Hemingway “loved being in love,” the writer Michael Katakis says in the film. He married four times over the course of his tumultuous life and had three sons. His relationships with women — his mother, sisters, wives and the World War I nurse who broke his heart — profoundly affected his work. Yet for all his bravado and hyper-masculine posturing, Hemingway wrote about relationships between men and women with sensitivity, nuance and clarity. As writer Edna O’Brien says on camera, he was able to put himself “inside the skin” of the other and give voice to women’s deepest emotions.

Narrated by long-time collaborator Peter Coyote, the series features an all-star cast of actors bringing Hemingway (voiced by Jeff Daniels), his friends and family vividly to life. Through letters to and from his four wives — voiced by Meryl Streep, Keri Russell, Mary-Louise Parker and Patricia Clarkson — the film reveals Hemingway at his most romantic and his most vulnerable, grappling at times with insecurity, anxiety and



existential loneliness.

“I’ve always admired Hemingway’s writing,” said Daniels. “The power of his simplicity changed literature. Reading his published work along with his unpublished letters gave me new insight into his impact as an artist and the ultimate tragedy of his life.”

In three two-hour episodes, **HEMINGWAY** tracks the meteoric rise and tragic fall of the author who, in his final years, suffered from chronic alcoholism, serious mental illness, traumatic brain injuries and depression. In 1961, at the age of 61, Hemingway died by suicide, leaving behind an unparalleled body of artistic work and a complicated emotional legacy for those closest to him.

The filmmakers were granted unusually open access to the treasure trove of Hemingway’s manuscripts, correspondence, scrapbooks and photographs housed at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston. Interviews with renowned biographers and scholars, including Mary Dearborn and Marc Dudley, shed new light on the man and his work; and well-known writers around the world — including Edna O’Brien, Abraham Verghese, Mario Vargas Llosa, Mary Karr, Tim O’Brien, Akiko Manabe, Leonardo Padura and Tobias Wolff — deepen the film’s exploration of Hemingway’s oeuvre. It also includes moving commentary from Hemingway’s surviving son, Patrick, and from the late Senator John McCain, whose lifelong role model was not Hemingway, but Robert Jordan, the protagonist of *For Whom the Bell Tolls*.

[PBS LearningMedia](#), a free service that includes thousands of contextualized learning materials aligned to state and national standards, will offer a host of educational offerings for middle and high school teachers related to **HEMINGWAY**. Resources will include video clips, activities, discussion questions and lesson plans focusing on a range of topics relevant to English Language Arts, social studies, media literacy, and health teachers, and include suggestions for incorporating these materials into remote learning environments. PBS and WETA will also offer virtual professional learning opportunities for educators to help them navigate the resources and build the skills to bring topics related to Hemingway’s life and writing to life in their classrooms.

HEMINGWAY will be available to stream for free on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](#) and the [PBS Video App](#), available on iOS, Android, Roku streaming devices, Apple TV, Android TV, Amazon Fire TV, Samsung Smart TV and Chromecast. PBS station members can view the documentary via PBS Passport, as part of a full collection of Ken Burns films. For more information about PBS Passport, visit the [PBS Passport FAQ](#) website.

HEMINGWAY is a production of Florentine Films and WETA, Washington, D.C. Directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, written by Geoffrey C. Ward, and produced by Burns, Novick and Sarah Botstein. Original music produced by Johnny Gandelsmen, with additional music created by longtime Florentine collaborator David Cieri.



Corporate funding for **HEMINGWAY** was provided by Bank of America. Major funding was provided by the Annenberg Foundation, The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, by members of 'The Better Angels Society,' including: John & Leslie McQuown, the Elizabeth Ruth Wallace Living Trust, John & Catherine Debs, the Fullerton Family Charitable Fund, the Kissick Family Foundation, Gail M. Elden through the Jewish Federation of Chicago, Gilchrist & Amy Berg, Robert & Beverly Grappone, Mauree & Mark Perry, and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and PBS.

About WETA

WETA is the leading public broadcaster in the nation's capital, serving Virginia, Maryland and the District of Columbia with educational initiatives and with high-quality programming on television, radio and digital. WETA Washington, D.C., is the second largest producing-station of new content for public television in the United States, with productions and co-productions including PBS NEWSHOUR, WASHINGTON WEEK, THE KENNEDY CENTER MARK TWAIN PRIZE, THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS GERSHWIN PRIZE FOR POPULAR SONG, LATINO AMERICANS, ASIAN AMERICANS and documentaries by filmmaker Ken Burns and scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr. Sharon Percy Rockefeller is president and CEO. More information on WETA and its programs and services is available at www.weta.org.

About PBS

PBS, with more than 330 member stations, offers all Americans the opportunity to explore new ideas and new worlds through television and digital content. Each month, PBS reaches over 120 million people through television and 26 million people online, inviting them to experience the worlds of science, history, nature and public affairs; to hear diverse viewpoints; and to take front row seats to world-class drama and performances. PBS' broad array of programs has been consistently honored by the industry's most coveted award competitions. Teachers of children from pre-K through 12th grade turn to PBS for digital content and services that help bring classroom lessons to life. Decades of research confirms that PBS' premier children's media service, PBS KIDS, helps children build critical literacy, math and social-emotional skills, enabling them to find success in school and life. Delivered through member stations, PBS KIDS offers high-quality educational content on TV – including a 24/7 channel, online at pbskids.org, via an array of mobile apps and in communities across America. More information about PBS is available at www.pbs.org, one of the leading dot-org websites on the internet, or by following [PBS on Twitter](#), [Facebook](#) or through our [apps for mobile and connected devices](#). Specific program information and updates for press are available at pbs.org/pressroom or by following [PBS Pressroom on Twitter](#).

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